

BOOK REVIEW

LORRAINE G. BONNEY. 2011. **The Big Thicket Guidebook: Exploring the Backroads and History of Southeast Texas.** (ISBN: 978-1-5744-1318-2, cloth hbk). Big Thicket Association, University of North Texas Press, 1155 Union Circle #311336, Denton, Texas 76203-5017, U.S.A. (**Orders:** www.unt.edu/untpress, www.tamupress.com, 1-800-826-8911). \$29.95, 848 pp., 100 illus., 16 maps, bib., index, 6" × 9".

Whether you are the "Quick, Honey. Grab the kids and suitcases and let's hit the open road!" or the "I'll just curl up in my favorite easy chair and read without actually having to go anywhere" type, you will undoubtedly enjoy this large, carefully researched, informative, colorful, and delightfully humorous book. Canadian by birth, Lorraine was married to the late Houston attorney Orrin H. Bonney. They were co-authors, and after his death Lorraine finished two books, *The Grand Controversy: History of Climbing in the Tetons in 1934* and *Wyoming Mountain Ranges*.

This volume is actually Number 6 in the Temple Big Thicket Series, published by the Big Thicket Association (University of Texas Press, Denton). It contains a wealth of background information, accompanied by current maps, very specific instructions, and delightful tales of the people who lived there—and still live there—throughout the known history of the area. Be sure to read the General Introduction (pp. x–xiv) for a quick assessment of what you are about to enjoy.

If you are planning to visit the Big Thicket, by all means, take this volume with you! If you're flying to Texas and renting a car to visit the area—or for that matter, if you live in Texas but have a passel of kids and luggage—you might hesitate because of the book's size. Nevertheless, you will benefit greatly by having it with you. Part I, entitled "Some East Texas History," provides a quick overview; Part II, "Some Southeast Texas Towns," provides a great and often humorous account of the colorful towns and their equally colorful inhabitants along the way; and Part III, "Roadside History of Southeast Texas," provides very, very specific—and current!—road information about getting to all the colorful places. It identifies 15 tours, but it also includes specific sections in the larger areas. (How specific? Well, as an example, Tour 6 also has a Tour 6A, Tour 6B, and Tour 6C!) Part III starts on p. 199 and continues to p. 787. And it is all both fun and fascinating, as well as telling you specifically how to get to your intended destinations.

In the General Introduction, Professor Emeritus Pete A.Y. Gunter refers to the late comedian Johnny Carson's famous claim that there was only one fruitcake in the entire world; it just got passed from one family to another. He continues:

"In one respect Lorraine Bonney's *The Big Thicket Guidebook* is simple. It is a travelogue, guiding the reader through the Big Thicket. But, like the 'Thicket' itself, her writing is and has to be a tangle of folklore and topography, of geology and history, of biology and personality. It is an unlikely compendium of local hearsay, careful archival research, wild improbable stories and data dug out of courthouse records. It is indeed—the texture of a fruitcake: uneven, in part sour, in part sweet, at times fun, at times hard to digest, and extremely rich (in details)."

Whether you are an active and happy traveler or an armchair reader, you will probably be delighted to keep this book handy, available for browsing or active trip-planning, and/or just plain enjoyable reading.
—Helen Jeude, Volunteer & Assistant Editor, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, Texas, U.S.A.